

## Pornographic Adaptations: Tales of a Woman Reused, Reduced, Recycled

By Noora Sharara

The archival turn in experimental film stems from a shift in historiography, which questioned whether the archive's images could be trusted as authentic, unadulterated symbols of the past. Through their appropriation of found footage, filmmakers created new subjectivities for the marginalized, oppressed, and silenced groups in contemporary society. A particular subtrend concerned with a feminist deployment of archival pornographic material developed within the found-footage genre to self-reflexively empower women against objectification. A close reading of *Marilyn Times Five* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1973) and *Removed* (Naomi Uman, USA, 1999) demonstrates how this practice embroiled itself in medium-specific affairs such as cinephilia, haptic cinema, and the star system to unveil another, underlying motive. As suggested by these films' use of *only* archival footage, Conner and Uman engage with film history, traveling back in time to excavate the root of cinema's genesis: the fetishized female form.

For Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, the archive is the primary power structure of knowledge. By arbitrating among documents to include in or exclude from its formulation of the past, it foregrounds itself as 'the first law of what can be said'<sup>1</sup> about history. Indeed, the process of archiving 'produces as much as it records the event,'<sup>2</sup> for it not only knits a narrative from the mass of inexhaustible content, but also determines what is stored and therefore what is remembered. In the 1980s, historians began to understand the past no longer as singular and objective but rather as socially constructed, prompting them to question the archive's status as a legitimate source of knowledge. Perhaps because avant-garde cinema is fundamentally concerned with alternative forms of storytelling, this shift in perspective inspired experimental filmmakers to retrieve and repurpose documents from the past, a practice which gradually developed into the 'found-footage' genre. This coincides with Henri Bergson's conception of time as duration, 'the preservation or prolongation of the past, entailing the coexistence of past and present.'<sup>3</sup> This suggests that all of our present experiences are entangled with and therefore influenced by those of our past, from which it can be inferred that altering our past will then alter our present. From this perspective, found-footage filmmakers possessed the ability to reconstruct those homogenizing narratives that had dictated our understanding of history and thereby offer us as corollary a theoretically new present. With *Marilyn Times Five*, Conner salvages a short sequence from the soft-core porno *The Apple-Knockers and the Coke* (USA, 1948) which he segments and repeats in specific ways, thus continuously reframing the footage. In *Removed*, Uman recycles two scenes from a German pornographic film. She incorporates a dubbed-in English dialogue and removes the women from the original footage, erasing them from the very filmstrip. Such films reveal that archived documents do not represent the truth of the past but only an infinitely amendable version, which relegates their function to one of 'metonymy.'<sup>4</sup> Because a metonymy is

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Historical *a Priori* and the Archive," quoted in Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*, London: Routledge, 2014, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, quoted in Baron, (2014), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson on Memory," *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Baron, (2014), 123.

‘a substitute for or symbol of something else’ (*OED*, b),<sup>5</sup> it is severed from the signified but contingent upon context to relate the two back to each other. Yet, if the metonymy were severed also from the context wherein that which it signifies is deictically understood, it becomes a blank slate, potentially made to symbolize *anything* through the mere act of recontextualization. This analogy between found footage and metonymy dismantles the preconception that ‘meaning is inherent in the footage rather than in the interpretive framework through which we approach it.’<sup>6</sup> More importantly, this elucidates Conner’s montage: figured as metonymies, the shots are placed in different interpretive frameworks through their repetition. Drawing on the Kuleshov effect, Conner demonstrates that it is not the shots themselves but their various juxtapositions that generate meaning. As a result, editing can be deployed to make the subject of a film represent virtually anything. Similarly, because the sound in *Removed* does not originate from the found footage, this places the characters within a new interpretive framework that reveals how the woman’s moans are not *natural* but *performed*, since they are able to be replicated in post-production. Such recontextualizations allow Conner and Uman to exhibit the constructed nature of pornographic films in order to dismantle the fixed gender roles they promote.

Drawing on Albert Goldbarth’s “The Origin of Porno,” Linda Williams attributes the origins of pornography to *Animal Locomotion* – a large-scale exhibition of Eadweard Muybridge’s early photographs. In Goldbarth’s poem, the speaker parodies Leland Stanford’s famed question – *is there ever a moment when all four feet leave the ground?* – by claiming underneath it lurked another question, ‘an academic question, of at which point in a leap the female breast is highest.’<sup>7</sup> Indeed, when human movement was first subjected to the precise and supposedly objective eye of the camera, it instigated – as with the horse – a desire to see ‘the initially unseeable “truths” of this motion.’<sup>8</sup> Termed *scientia sexualis* by Foucault, this desire for the ‘truths’ of motion is actually a desire for the truths of *sexuality*: since sexuality, for Foucault, governs the body, it governs motion too. That this *scientia sexualis* was concealed beneath ‘academic questions’ is revealed in Muybridge’s motion studies. Though his male and female subjects perform the same tasks, such as sitting on a chair, the woman is consistently ‘embedded in a mise-en-scène that places her in a more specific imaginary place and time.’<sup>9</sup> Indeed, she is never, like the man, simply sitting on a chair: she is sitting on a chair *fanning herself*, or sitting on a chair *smoking a cigarette*. These photographs thus depict cinema’s first venture into narrative and mise-en-scène, which are evidently already rooted in gender differences. More importantly, Williams argues that the photographs ‘could be said to have begun the cinematic tradition of fetishization’<sup>10</sup> – in other words, the beginnings of pornography. Through their use of archival pornographic footage, Conner and Uman thus conjure up these origins, reminding viewers that they are not only watching old cinema – they are watching *the very inception of cinema*.

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<sup>5</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, “Metonymy,”

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117628?redirectedFrom=metonymy#eid>, [accessed 15.12.18].

<sup>6</sup> Baron, (2014), 4.

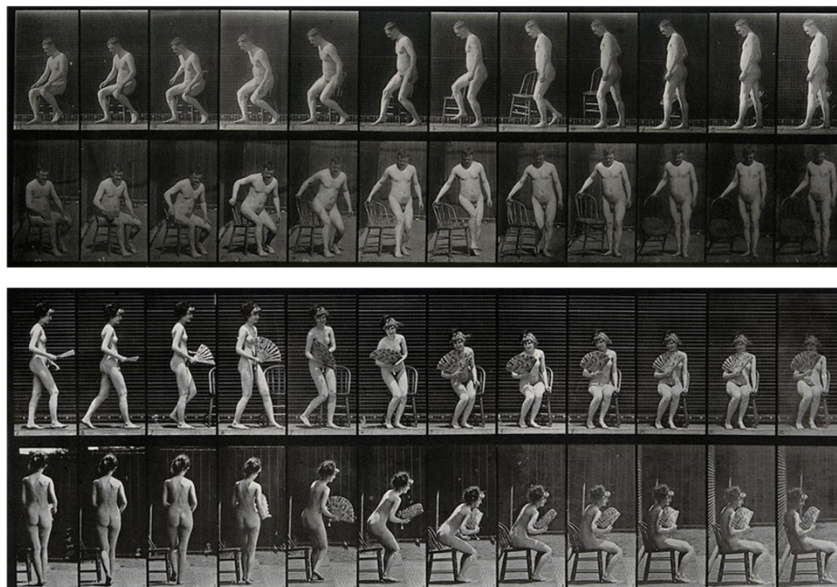
<sup>7</sup> Albert Goldbarth, “The Origin of Porno,” quoted in Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible,”* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 34.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, (1999), 39.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion*, 1887.  
 (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/rk3ztcqh?query=%22Photograph%22>),  
 [accessed 15.12.18].



Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion*, 1887.  
 (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/b-he3j49u?query=%22Photograph%22>),  
 [accessed 15.12.18].

Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion*, 1887.  
 (<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/e6r7vt8m?query=%22Photograph%22>),  
 [accessed 15.12.18].

Defined by Williams as a ‘frenzy of the visible,’<sup>11</sup> pornography drove the concept of *scientia sexualis* to its extreme. Adhering to a ‘principle of maximum visibility’<sup>12</sup> in its quest for the truths of sexuality, pornography guaranteed a visual representation of not just sex but, indeed, the *truth* of sex: ‘the ultimate and uncontrollable – ultimate *because* uncontrollable – confession of sexual pleasure in the climax of orgasm.’<sup>13</sup> However, with the ‘money shot’ (that of the penis ejaculating) only able to capture the male orgasm, maximum visibility encountered its limits when faced with the elusive female orgasm, located in the phantom-like site of castration. Pornography therefore relied on women to *perform* the orgasm, rendering it visible by writhing excessively then reverting to a motionless state to signal climax. From this perspective, pornography does not represent the truth of female sexuality – instead, it fabricates a fiction of it. *Marilyn Times Five* and *Removed* ironically emulate this by positing themselves as fabricated fictions. Despite the match cuts throughout the film, Conner’s conspicuous editing counteracts any sense of continuity and thus does not claim to simulate reality: instead, it broadcasts itself as a construct. Similarly, because Uman’s alterations on the celluloid are clearly visible *as alterations*, every shot in *Removed* is an emblem of its artifice.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

Since Bergson defines time as duration, he postulates that memories cannot be stored in the brain, ‘which is seated in the present,’ for ‘memories concern the past.’<sup>14</sup> They must instead be preserved in our sensorium, and are thus conjured up whenever one is faced with an image, since images contain ‘all the information that one’s senses perceive about an object.’<sup>15</sup> Inspired by Bergson, Laura U. Marks extends this multisensory experience derived from the image to cinema. More specifically, Marks claims that films, unlike reality, can preserve the memories associated with the sense of touch. The ephemeral nature of tactility induces in the perceiver a certain sense of loss. This loss can only be relieved through the image, for the image is eternal, ‘the object itself, [...] freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it.’<sup>16</sup> Indeed, André Bazin claims photography was invented to satisfy man’s fear of ‘a second spiritual death’<sup>17</sup> – that of being forgotten posthumously. Film provides an even greater death mask by displaying the object, no longer bound by an instant, in its *duration*. Returning to Bergson’s definition of duration as the co-existence of past and present, cinema thus becomes the ultimate embodiment of memory. Yet, if the image itself were to experience the destructive effects of time, our sense of loss would not be relieved; rather, it would be amplified. That which is supposedly eternal is suddenly withering before our eyes, reminding us of our similarly mortal condition and insignificance in the face of time. Jaimie Baron terms this ‘the archive affect’ of found-footage cinema – that sense of ‘temporal disparity [which] forces us to recognize that the past is irretrievable even as its traces are visible.’<sup>18</sup> Laura Mulvey claims that to escape the anxiety of castration generated by the female form, men transform her body ‘into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous.’<sup>19</sup> Correspondingly, mankind transforms its fear of death into a fetish for death: the death drive. The death drive is particularly activated by the found-footage genre. Though the recognition of our analogous decay is initially jarring, it comes to emblemize a certain ‘aesthetic of ruins’<sup>20</sup> infused with a *pleasant* sense of nostalgia. Cinephilia is thus born out of this fetishization of the past, inspired by a ‘retrospective revalorization’ of all that is no longer.<sup>21</sup> *Marilyn Times Five* and *Removed* situate themselves within the contemporary subcategory of vintage porn – arguably, the sexually-explicit extension of cinephilia. Resurrected from the archive, pornographic footage marked with scratches and photodegraded celluloid is ‘marketed online as a distinct fetish category, either ensconced within niche-specific websites [...] or listed as one of many subcategories on large porn metasites.’<sup>22</sup> These pornographic subcategories often center around single body parts, a dehumanizing practice of dissection that can even be likened to an autopsy. In *Marilyn Times Five*, Conner engages with these subcategories through closeups of the woman’s limbs that cinematically frame them as discrete, fetish-objects. This process evokes a certain necrophilic desire for the woman herself to be dead while her body continues to function without

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<sup>14</sup> Ansell-Pearson, (2010), 64.

<sup>15</sup> Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, 146.

<sup>16</sup> André Bazin, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image,” *Film Theory and Criticism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, 129.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Baron, (2014), 21.

<sup>19</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1 October 1975, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Catherine Russell, “Archival Apocalypse: Found Footage as Ethnography,” quoted in Adrian Danks, “The Global Art of Found Footage Cinema,” *Traditions in World Cinema*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, 242.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, “Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment,” *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005, 33.

<sup>22</sup> David Church, *Disposable Passions: Vintage Pornography and the Material Legacies of Adult Cinema*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 25.

her. The vintage allure of the found footage, through its intrinsic connotations of death, intensifies the necrophile's craving for a corpse onscreen. As previously discussed, Uman satisfies such desires by wiping out the female characters in a brutal bleach-induced murder. Their dismemberment is accentuated by the fact that even their voices are divorced from their bodies, since the dialogue we hear does not originate within the actual image. Moreover, the amorphous shapes that replace the females still masturbate throughout the film, demonstrating that though the women are dead their bodies continue to be sexually active.

Marks expands upon cinema's distinct relation to the sense of touch by theorizing a certain 'haptic visuality' whereby 'the eyes themselves function like organs of touch.'<sup>23</sup> Unlike optical perception that concerns itself with what is represented in the image, haptic perception prioritizes the image's materiality. This kind of perception requires an active viewer, one who will move closer to the screen, forgoing his or her autonomy from the image in order to discern its every texture. Consequently, by allowing the image to penetrate his or her personal space, 'the perceiver relinquishes power over the perceived.'<sup>24</sup> Without the screen's separational protection, the viewer is left unarmed, naked, and vulnerable to the image's effects. This makes haptic cinema particularly powerful. Indeed, *Marilyn Times Five* and *Removed* rely on their hapticity as a subversive force against the gender dynamics depicted onscreen. As expressed in the film's title, Conner's allusion to Marilyn Monroe manipulates the spectator into a haptic relationship with the film. The prevalent upside-down shots wake viewers out of their passivity as they swivel their heads and squint their eyes, attempting to identify whether the actress really is Monroe. Though the actress is not Monroe, this manipulation is furthered by the sound of Monroe's unquestionably recognizable voice in the non-diegetic music. A symbol of Hollywood glitz and glamour, Monroe epitomized what it means to be a commodity. With her image as the cover and centerfold of the first *Playboy* issue, she was thereafter only to be exhibited for the male gaze, doubling the equivalence of her body with *product* since, as a star, she already functions to sell films. Conner's reference to Monroe is thus self-reflexive. Facilitated by the haptic materiality of the degraded found footage, Conner's strategy of luring his viewer into adopting a haptic visuality allows him to overturn gender hierarchies. Indeed, because this type of spectatorship allows the perceived to overpower the perceiver, the woman onscreen, unlike Monroe, is vulnerable to neither the male gaze nor voyeurism. She has total *control* over the viewer. In contemporary advertisements for female beauty products, the word 'control' figures repetitively to inculcate in women that they must control themselves – the only type of control to which they are entitled. Self-control requires women to always remain 'monitoring themselves for signs of imperfection.'<sup>25</sup> Conversely, the rhetoric of similar commercials aimed at male consumers promotes 'control over *others* rather than the self.'<sup>26</sup> *Marilyn Times Five* thus reverses this discourse. To destabilize the gender dynamics at play in *Removed*, Uman draws on hapticity in two ways. First, her *own* haptic relation to the film through her manual labor of frame-by-frame erasure irreversibly alters the original footage, preventing its female characters from ever being resurrected. Significantly, this also prevents the women from being touched: the viewer, engaged in a haptic relation with the grainy footage, strains to see the female and is denied. As soon as those glimpses of her past life resurface, the

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<sup>23</sup> Marks, (2000), 162.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>25</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 57.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

viewer's hands reach for the screen but sink into the white viscosity instead, for she is gone again. The woman thus cannot be consumed.

According to Mulvey, films reflect the 'socially established interpretation of sexual difference' whereby the man is the *looker* and the woman is *to-be-looked-at*.<sup>27</sup> In *Marilyn Times Five*, the female obsessively contorts her body, plays with her hair, and puckers her lips – all attempts to conform to a certain image of desirability. In the first scene of *Removed*, closeups of a man nodding in approval at the sight of his nude partner suggest that he is assessing whether her body merits to be looked at.



[Please double-click on image above to play clip from *Removed*.]

Such emphasis on appearance entails problematic consequences for women: since their function gravitates *only* around how they look, in order to survive as constituents of society they must conform to this role. Manipulating their bodies to fulfill the looker's needs, they ensure their survival by indeed *being looked at*. If the female body does not satisfy pre-established definitions of beauty, it ceases – in social terms – to exist. *Removed* concretizes this threat of non-existence by erasing the female figures from the film. However, Uman posits this act as a product of *their own doing* through her use of feminine domestic products, such as nail polish remover and bleach, to perform the erasure. Thus, the women reclaim control over their bodies. Nonetheless, beneath the empowering implications of Uman's erasures lurk ominous undertones of *actual* death. Hilde Bruch describes Body Image Distortion Syndrome, both a cause and product of anorexia, as 'disturbance in size awareness.'<sup>28</sup> Arguably, the women in *Removed* illustrate this anxious relationship to physical size: their bodies – writhing white blobs on the filmstrip – relentlessly grow and shrink according to their movement in the original footage. In this new interpretive

<sup>27</sup> Mulvey, (1975), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Hilde Bruch, *Eating Disorders*, quoted in Bordo, (2003), 55.

framework, however, their past movement is no longer visible; the blobs' changes in size thus only represent changes in size. Significantly, the women's transformation into blobs renders palpable the female conceptualization of her body 'as alien, not-self.'<sup>29</sup> Because of society's fixation on bodies as emblems of their worth, women discern a certain incongruence between their self-perception and the image their bodies purport to represent. The two never being in harmony, with their image often shredding their self-esteem to pieces, women no longer view their bodies as *their* bodies – rather, these are seen as foreign entities that seek only to thwart the female's progression in society. In the second scene of *Removed*, a woman undresses in front of a mirror as though under scrutiny. Indeed, the man watching her from the other side of the mirror observes that 'she's studying her body.' More importantly, after she removes her makeup, a closeup of the man saying 'she's admiring herself' reveals that his brows are furrowed in confusion. The word 'admiring' causes his intonation to rise, typically an aural signal that a question is being asked, which implies a certain objection to her level of self-esteem. In contrast with the previous man nodding in approval, he is not impressed enough by the woman's body. This is evinced most explicitly in the fact that, unlike his partner, he is not masturbating – instead, he is smoking a cigarette. Arguably, the cigarette can be viewed as a phallic symbol that suggests the man is more interested in *himself* than in the female body.

Because the feminine ideal is never fixed, it has become increasingly difficult for women to adapt to the ever-changing definitions of beauty, even sometimes inducing a desire to be 'without body'<sup>30</sup> altogether. Indeed, like Uman's blobs, without a body to-be-looked-at women emancipate themselves from having to conform to such stringent definitions. Yet, this conception of the non-body is idyllic, and, if enacted literally, entails not freedom but death. Through means such as starvation to shrink the body to nothing, the body ironically still strives to fulfill the very ideal from which it wants to escape – here, for example, that of slenderness. This twofold process whereby conforming to the ideal ensures survival in societal terms but death in literal terms is illustrated in Uman's film. While the blobs thrash with vivacity in the altered footage to symbolize their survival in society, their past bodies only surface as ghostly apparitions, symbolizing their death in reality. *Marilyn Times Five* similarly depicts the female struggle to adapt to society's ideas about beauty. Susan Bordo describes the 'role-demands placed on contemporary women' as 'fragmenting,'<sup>31</sup> which Conner exemplifies in his editing techniques. By dissecting the found footage into short fragments and vertiginously repeating these throughout the film, Conner illustrates the unnerving transformations to which women physically subject themselves. The dizzying effects of such repetitions are amplified by the upside-down shots and the jarring cuts to black that sporadically punctuate the film, disrupting any sense of narrative or continuity. Arguably, that these fragmentations are achieved in post-production foregrounds their symbolic function as one of *cosmetic surgery*. None of the shots display the female body in its entirety: her figure itself is fragmented as the camera hones in on specific body parts, simulating the surgeon's act of photographing areas of concern. To a degree, the non-diegetic music also insinuates this connection: the first lyric from Marilyn Monroe's "I'm Through With Love" (which, like the shots, is repeated throughout the film) is juxtaposed with the black screen. This lyric – 'I'm' – suggests, when read in musico-visual fashion, an analogy between the female and the empty image onscreen, as though she *is* the empty image. She is not an individual; indeed, she is a blank slate, a *tabula*

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<sup>29</sup> Bordo, (2003), 152.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

*rasa* waiting to be sculpted by experts, like Conner, who can *edit* her into ‘an increasingly artificial and ever more perfect object.’<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Uman’s handiwork hyperbolizes the contemporary process of retouching and airbrushing women’s figures to reveal the threatening possibility of *literally erasing the woman entirely*. Like Uman, Conner warns his viewers that the pursuit of perfection is both futile and destructive: the film’s repetitions simulate a vicious cycle wherein women endlessly transform their physique, deluded into believing they can someday win ‘the hopeless race for a perfect body – a body that is always different than the one they have.’<sup>33</sup>

Pornography crystallizes the gender dynamics at work in society, where the woman’s sole function is ‘to be consumed by men.’<sup>34</sup> In the first scene of *Removed*, the closeups of the man’s face as he watches his partner masturbate foreground him as a *spectator*, which allows the spectator offscreen to identify with him. Moreover, the second scene centers around a reciprocal mirror that allows one couple to spy on another. From the peephole side, the woman is aroused specifically by her voyeurism: she masturbates to the *idea* of a woman who cannot know she can see her, yet not once bothers to *actually see her*. Such scopophilic focus enhances the film’s eroticism, for pornography itself does not offer an opportunity for identification with characters because intercourse is a ‘self-sufficient spectacle,’<sup>35</sup> leaving no space for the viewer to thread himself into the diegesis. Though *Marilyn Times Five* does not induce character identification for the mere fact that no men are pictured in the film, it similarly derives its eroticism from scopophilia, allowing the viewer to identify instead with the camera. As the female strips, the camera tilts up and down, scanning her body in voyeuristic manner. She is mostly nude throughout the film, clad only in heels and underwear which she later scrunches to reveal more skin. A shot of her bringing her elbows closer together to emphasize the size of her breasts foregrounds her body, combined with the Coca-Cola bottle in her hand, as a *commodity*.

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<sup>32</sup> Kathryn Pauly Morgan, “Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women’s Bodies,” *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer*, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009, 53.

<sup>33</sup> Kathy Davis, “Revisiting Feminist Debates on Cosmetic Surgery: Some Reflections on Suffering, Agency, and Embodied Difference,” *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> Church, (2016), 42.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.





Bruce Conner, *Marilyn Times Five*.

For Linda Williams, pornography's infamous money shot is 'the most representative instance of phallic power and pleasure.'<sup>36</sup> Arguably, Uman incorporates the money shot in her female figures: the blobs, bearing a semen-like materiality, assume the function of signaling climax and thereby nullify the need for the actual money shot, preempting the phallus from asserting its power. In *Marilyn Times Five*, the Coke bottle symbolizes the phallus. The female's lips slowly cup the bottle's rim as her eyes pruriently raise towards the camera, suggesting fellatio. One can infer, then, that when she swallows the drink she implies that it is semen: the symbolic male has ejaculated, confirming her sexual *savoir faire*. This therefore doubly situates the woman within a commercial framework, advertising both the Coke and herself. The women in *Removed* are also diegetically figured as commodities. In the scene with the two-way mirror, a woman masturbates to another woman's physical details, such as the size of her breasts, the flatness of her stomach, and the color of her pubic hair. Aided by her partner who responds to her question – 'Walter, what do you see?' – by describing the sight, she develops an image of the woman only through his words. Despite the shot-reverse-shot structure of the scene, Uman's erasures prevent even the viewer from developing an image of the woman that isn't dependent on Walter's words. His vision and speech thus gain preeminence, rendering an impression of the female body mediated first by his opinion of it. Along with the comment 'she's got a fantastic ass,' this constructs the woman as a commodity he is advertising. More explicitly, a closeup in the first scene frames a woman's face next to piles of cash, a juxtaposition that evokes the phrase *face value*. This thus suggests she is a product, bearing her price-tag and waiting to be sold.

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<sup>36</sup> Williams, (1999), 95.



Naomi Uman, *Removed*.

In their films, Conner and Uman appropriate archival pornographic footage which they both place within overtly synthetic frameworks. Deploying medium-specific strategies such as editing and dubbed sound, the filmmakers preempt the found footage from appearing authentic. In a self-reflexive manner, they encourage their viewers to view the narratives as similarly inauthentic in order to reveal that the gender dynamics depicted within are not triumphant truths but constructed concepts. The use of found footage and its cinephiliac evocations allow Conner and Uman to figuratively reverse time. More importantly, their concern with fetishized female forms allows them to revert back to cinema's very origins, which are analogously premised upon the image of woman-as-fetish. However, by producing a haptic relation between the viewer and the image, the films thus empower their women against objectification. In *mise-en-abyme* fashion, *Marilyn Times Five* and *Removed* dismantle the gender discourses onscreen by positing that the women in the pornos, the pornos in the found footage, the found footage in the films, and the films themselves *are all constructs*.

## **Filmography:**

*Marilyn Times Five*. Directed by Bruce Conner. USA. 1973.

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